

Arm Soreness

What does it mean and what should I do?

Baseball season has passed the half way mark for most players with many games under their belt at this point and some preparing to begin a new summer season. Some players are already showing signs of fatigue with many games still left to play. During this time of year many questions also arise from the players, coaches and parents regarding surviving the season. For example, "What do I do if my arm is sore?" When is it ok to throw after my arm has been sore? How many pitches can I throw? Why does my non throwing arm feel stronger than my throwing arm?

When your arm is sore it is your body's way of telling you it has been over worked or overstressed. To some degree the warning of soreness is ok as long as you listen to it. Just to clarify when we talk about soreness this is not severe shoulder pain or sharp pains in the shoulder, neck or elbow. These could indicate a more serious condition and should be examined by a medical professional. The type of soreness that occurs after throwing is generally caused by overstressing the muscle in this case most often the rotator cuff muscles. These are the muscles that cause rotational acceleration (concentric contraction) of the upper arm to propel the ball. These muscles also must slow down the arm after the ball is released causing an eccentric contraction during deceleration of the arm. These muscles become overstretched and some theorize that this soreness is caused by micro tearing of the muscle tissue; hence icing after pitching is an attempt to reduce the inflammation process. By stopping the actions that produced the soreness, ie throwing, the body heals this over time. The amount of time is dependent on how much stress was induced and how resistant the muscles were to the stress. This resistance can be altered by increasing strength and endurance in the specific muscles used in throwing. Continuing to throw with a sore arm compounds the problem and increases the risk of more serious damage to the muscles and joint not to mention reduces performance secondary to pain and reduced power generation of the arm.

In summary your arm needs rest after it is stressed. Pitching is generally the position that produces a large degree of stress secondary to the number of throws and the intensity level of each throw. Think of it this way; if you ran a marathon on Monday would you run another one on Tuesday? There is no magic number on how much time is enough to start throwing again, everyone has a different threshold. Some organizations have instituted rules. For example National Little League® has pitch count rules for various age groups. If you pitch X pitches you

must rest X amount of time before pitching again and there are maximums that can be reached. This is a good safety measure but what it does not account for is when players play in multiple leagues. Some things you can do to reduced arm soreness.

1. Baseball specific training in the off season and a maintenance program in season to maintain your arm strength and stamina is of utmost importance.
2. Warm up properly before throwing.
3. Insure proper throwing technique- make sure you are throwing with your whole body not just your arm. Your legs and core have much more power and stamina than your arm- take advantage of it.
4. Icing immediately after extreme throwing can be helpful.
5. Listen to your body. Soreness is your body's way of telling you its needs some time to recover.

For more information please call UPMC/CRS Sports Performance at 724-444-8850

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